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The Office Action given 29 October 2002 has been received and duly noted. Enclosed please find a request for a three month extension of time that will extend the time for response until 29 April 2003.

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly distinguish the receptacle assembly from the cited prior art. More particularly, Claim 1 has been amended to clearly recite that the receptacle basket includes a frustoconical basket supporting surface for planar engagement with the supported surface of the elongated member.

The Examiner has contended that the term "planar" as used in Claim 1 is sufficiently broad to include the surface being frustoconical, but contends that the accepted meaning of the term "planar" is "flat". As used in the specification, Applicant submits that it is clear that the term "planar", when referring to the basket supporting surface, indicates that this surface is intended for planar engagement with a supported surface of the elongate member, meaning that the two surfaces have substantially "planar-to-planar" engagement, rather than line or point engagement, and the term "planar" does not mean "flat". The Examiner contends that Langner shows a tapered supporting surface as previously called for in dependent Claim 8. Langner clearly does not disclose a frustoconical supporting surface on the basket for "planar" engagement with the supporting surface of the elongate member. Applicant appreciates that the surface 72 as shown in Figure 10 of Langner is a frustoconical surface, but it is not a supporting surface, and instead is, as disclosed in specification, merely a guiding surface. While various embodiments are disclosed in Langner, none of the

embodiments include the frustoconical basket supporting surface as recited in amended Claim 1.

With respect to dependent Claim 14, Examiner contends that the receptacle basket bore is at a selected azimuth and declination relative to the oilfield production structure. Applicant has carefully reviewed Langner and submits that the receptacle basket of Langner has a selected declination, and nowhere in the disclosure of Langner can Applicant find any suggestion for providing a receptacle basket with a bore at a selected azimuth and declination relative to the oilfield production structure. As indicated in the application, providing a receptacle basket with a bore at this selected azimuth and declination is a significant feature of the invention which is not shown in the cited prior art.

With respect to independent Claim 22, the undersigned submits that Langner neither discloses nor suggests the combination recited in this claim. The elongate member in Langner may be positioned at a selected declination relative to the offshore structure, but the combination of the receptacle basket and the elongate member do not allow for positioning the elongate member at both the selected azimuth and declination relative to the offshore structure, as recited in Claim 22.

Claims 2-4, 12, 24 and 25 were rejected as being unpatentable over Langner in view of Marshall. Figure 5 of Marshall discloses a strut member 112 which, as disclosed that column 6 commencing at line 41, is used for applying tension to the riser. Based on the disclosure of Marshall, one may actuate the strut member 112 as shown in Figure 5 to apply a desired tension to the riser, but Marshall does not disclose or suggest a receptacle basket which is moveable relative to the mounting bracket for

reducing forces transmitted by the elongate member to the structure. To the contrary, the sole purpose of strut 112 is to increase stress forces between the riser and the structure. Also, Langner assumes that the riser has a sufficient length and weight so that the riser is desirably tensioned, and thus there is no reason for someone to combine the strut 112 of Marshall with Langner. Once the assembly as shown in Figure 5 is in place, the receptacle basket of Marshall does not move relative to the mounting bracket, and Marshall does not disclose a receptacle basket pivotably supported on the supporting bracket and moveable about a substantially horizontally pivot axis, as recited in Claim 3.

With respect to dependent Claim 4, the Examiner contends that Marshall further discloses an adjustment member for adjusting the annular position of the receptacle basket relative to the mounting bracket. Strut member 112 of Marshall is not used for adjusting the annular position of the basket relative to the mounting bracket, but rather is provided for initial tensioning the elongate member.

With respect to dependent Claim 12, the Examiner contends that it would be obvious to modify Langner to provide a stop as taught by Marshall, in order to limit movement of the basket. Applicant respectfully disputes Examiner contention that the strut member 112 as shown in Marshall acts as a stop to limit basket movement. Strut member 112 is used for tensioning, and does not provide a stop as recited in Claim 12.

Dependent Claims 24 and 25 are considered allowable over the cited references since they depend upon independent Claim 22, which is considered allowable, and also since each of these claims contains additional limitations discussed above.

In Claims 5-7, 9-11 and 23 were rejected as being unpatentable over Langner in view of Recalde. Applicant respectfully submits that one skilled in the art would not look to technology directed to a stinger latching device used for running pipeline from a ship in order to improve technology for a receptacle assembly supported on a surface or near surface offshore oilfield production structure, as recited in Claim 1. Recalde indicates at column 4 commencing at line 30 that the interconnection of the stinger 12 with the barge and the stinger allows the stinger to be released from the barge at the end of the pipeline laying operation, and also during extreme weather conditions to avoid damage to the stinger or the barge. The desirability of an expeditious connection and disconnection of a stinger from a pipeline barge does not provide an incentive for modifying the prior art receptacle basket of Langner.

With respect to the specific arrangement of the projecting and receiving members as recited in Claims 6 and 7, Applicant would first point out that Recalde does not teach a receptacle basket having an annular body with a throughbore for receiving the elongate member and having a frustoconical basket supporting surface for planar engagement with the elongate member, as recited in Claim 1. Since there is no teaching for the combination of references, there can be no teaching for the specific recitations as recited in as dependent claims.

With respect to dependent Claim 9, the Examiner contends that it would have been obvious at the time of the invention to modify Langner to provide a left side and a right side racket plate and a horizontal pin, but there is no suggestion in Langner for such a combination, nor any reason disclosed in Langner for providing such a combination. As previously noted, Recalde does not satisfy the deficiency since

Recalde is not related to a receptacle basket having an annular body with a throughbore, as recited in Claim 1. Even if the combination of Langner and Recalde were somehow made, neither reference teaches the assembly recited in Claim 10 nor the slot in the receptacle basket for receiving the pin members, as cited in Claim 11. Dependent Claim 23 is considered patentable since it depends upon independent Claim 22, and since the prior art does not suggest the combination as recited in dependent Claim 23.

Newly added Claim 26 is similar to independent Claim 21, and further recites that the elongate member is supported on the receptacle basket such that the receptacle basket, when supported on the mounting bracket, is positioned off a side of the offshore oilfield production structure, and further recites that the receptacle basket has a throughbore with a selected azimuth and declination relative to the oilfield production structure. This claim is thus considered patentable and distinguishable from the prior art for reasons discussed above. Dependent Claims 27 and 28 are directed to the features recited in originally filed Claims 2 and 5, respectively.

In view of the above, a early allowance of the application is requested.


Marked-up Version of Claim:

1. (Amended) A receptacle assembly supported on a surface or near surface offshore oilfield production structure for receiving therein and permanently supporting an elongate member extending downward to one of the seabed or another structure, the elongate member having a supported surface affixed thereto, the receptacle assembly comprising:

a mounting bracket fixedly secured to the structure; and

a receptacle basket supported on the mounting bracket, the receptacle basket having an annular body with a throughbore therein for receiving the elongate member and having a frustoconical basket supporting surface for planar engagement with the supported surface of the elongate member.

Respectfully submitted,


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Date: 22 April, 2003

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence and all referenced enclosures are being deposited by me with the United States Postal Service as Regular Mail in an envelope addressed to the Assistant Commissioner of Patents, BOX PATENT APP., Washington, DC 20231 on April 28, 2003.

By: _____


(Name)